

## Baubles and Brews: The 3.5e Potion Description List

By Dana Driscoll

### Introduction

*Player: "I go open the chest"*

*DM: "The wooden lid of the chest throws of tendrils of dust as you lift it open.. Reaching inside the chest, you find a square leather purse filled with gold pieces, a silver-plated dagger with runes engraved in the blade with a ruby in the hilt, and a thick black silk cloak. Oh..and three potions."*

While many adventurers see potions as mundane, almost insignificant, magical items, these magical liquids often mean the difference between survival and demise. Part of the reason for the deprecation of the value of potions is because neither players nor a DM pays them much attention. What do they look like? What do they taste like? This article is an attempt to breathe life back into those magical baubles and brews—by providing a DM with a descriptive potion list for the 3.5 edition rule set as well as a simple guide to creating new potion descriptions.

### Potion and Oil Description:

Describing a potion or creating a new one is only limited by your imagination. Even though they are minor magical items, they are still imbued with powerful magic, and should reflect this status. The key to designing potions is to keep in mind the school of spell, function of spell, and any material components the spell may require. For this guide, a standardized method was used to derive descriptions for all of the potions and oils found in the SRD (and *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

First, each school of magic was assigned a "appearance feature" that remains consistent in each potion belonging to the school. The best attempts were made to assign each school a somewhat "representative" feature, based on the function of the school. There is no set standard for the "appearances" of such schools in the core materials, so some liberties were taken based on the nature of the school. The following list was used to assign potions:

abjuration—metallic

conjuration—opaque

divination—transparent

enchantment—multi-layered

evocation—swirled

illusion—sparkles or glimmers

necromancy—dark/black

transmutation—constantly moving

Once the school of the potion was determined, if the spell which the potion was derived from had any material components, their properties were added into the potion if possible. The material components can affect coloring, taste, and consistency. For example, one of the material components of a *darkvision* potion is carrots, so not only does the potion of flecks of orange floating inside, but tastes like carrot juice. Some spells do not have workable material components, and so the spell's function would be defaulted to in this case. Finally, a type of potion bottle or vial was assigned, fitting to the type potion itself.

## Potion and Oil Descriptive List

All lists are in alphabetical order. For prices and random potion generation, please refer to the *Dungeon Masters Guide* page 230.

### Magical Oils:

*Bless weapon:* Comes in a flattened vial with a silver stopper embossed with the creator's deity. The oil inside is constantly flowing white and silver. When poured on a weapon, the weapon takes on the moving quality.

*Darkness:* Comes in a flattened vial with a black cork stopper. The oil inside is solid, swirled gray and black with suspended bits of coal.

*Daylight:* Comes in a flattened vial with a white cork stopper. The oil inside is a solid, swirled gray and white with suspended bright flecks.

*Flame arrow:* Comes in a flattened vial with a red flint stopper. The slightly yellow oil inside appears to be flaming.

*Greater magic weapon:* Comes in a flattened vial with a silver stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity or personal rune. The oil inside has a deep golden appearance and constantly moves in a crisscross pattern.

*Invisibility:* Comes in a slim, flattened vial. It appears to be empty until examined closely. Upon examination, the bottle has small glimmering ripples of light and color inside.

*Keen edge:* Comes in a flattened vial with a golden stopper. The oil inside is filled with an orange liquid that is constantly moving in a jagged pattern.

*Levitate:* Comes in a circular flattened vial with a white corked top. The weightless oil inside is white with swirls of gold constantly moving through it.

*Magic stone :* Comes in a flattened vial with a stone stopper. The oil inside has a gray, gritty appearance and constantly moves in circles.

*Magic vestment:* Comes in a flattened vial with a silver stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity or personal rune. The oil inside has a slightly shimmery appearance and constantly moves in a crisscross pattern.

*Magic weapon:* Comes in a flattened vial with a silver stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity or personal rune. The oil inside has a slightly golden appearance and constantly moves in a crisscross pattern.

*Shillelagh:* Comes in a flattened vial with a wooden stopper. The oil inside has a brownish tint and moves in an elongated pattern.

**Magical Potions:**

*Aid:* Comes in a round bottle with a silver stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity. The liquid inside layered light blue and white and retains the layers even when shaken. It has the consistency of water but is and is slightly tastes of mint.

*Barkskin:* Comes in an oval glass bottle with a wooden carved stopper. The liquid inside is a mix of light and dark brown hues that are constantly swirling in a vertical fashion. It has a the consistency of syrup and tastes like fresh maple syrup. The more powerful the bonus, the thicker the syrup.

*Bear's endurance:* Comes in a small, square bottle . The liquid inside is shades of brown and is constantly moving. It is a thick consistency similar to orange juice and tastes slightly of raw meat.

*Blur:* Comes in a small, oval bottle. The liquid inside is a transparent lavender with white, slightly blurry suspended sparkles. It has the consistency of and taste of pure water and when ingested, makes the throat tingle.

*Bull's strength:* Comes in a small square bottle. The liquid inside is brown or gray in hue, with several floating short black hairs which are constantly moving inside the bottle. It has the consistency of orange juice and tastes slightly of dung.

*Cat's grace:* Comes in a small, square bottle. The liquid is light orange and yellow along with several orange hairs that appear to be constantly moving. It has the consistency of orange juice and tastes of catnip, slightly of mint.

*Cure light wounds:* Comes in a small ceramic vial. The opaque liquid inside is light shade of blue. Has the consistency of water and tastes mildly of almonds.

*Cure moderate wounds:* Comes in a small ceramic vial. The opaque liquid inside is a medium shade of blue. Has the consistency of water and tastes of almonds.

*Cure serious wounds:* Comes in a small ceramic vial. The opaque liquid inside is a deep shade of blue. Has the consistency of water and tastes strongly of almonds.

*Darkvision:* Comes in a ovular swirled vial with glass stopper shaped like an eye. The liquid inside is a constantly moving orange and gray with flecks of darker orange. It has a slightly lumpy consistency and tastes of pureed carrots.

*Delay poison:* Comes in a small elongated ceramic bottle. The liquid inside is a light opaque green. It has a lumpy consistency and tastes like rotten grass.

*Displacement:* Comes in a pyramid-shaped bottle with a cork stopper. The liquid inside is a translucent gray with darker purple sparkles. The liquid is less dense than water and tastes slightly of leather.

*Eagle's splendor:* Comes in a small square bottle. The liquid inside is feathered black white and brown that appears to be constantly moving. It has the consistency of orange juice and tastes slightly of dung.

*Endure elements:* Comes in a rectangular bottle with a copper stopper. The liquid inside is a metallic copper with small bubbles. It has a very thin, oily consistency and tastes slightly of dirt.

*Enlarge person:* Comes in an elongated ovular bottle with a fancy stopper. The liquid inside is a dark brown that appears to be constantly moving upward. It has a thick consistency and has a faint taste of iron shavings.

*Fly:* Comes in a glass bottle with a silver stopper shaped like a wing. It has a variety of browns, reds, tans, and whites that move in a abstract pattern within the bottle. It has a very thin consistency and when ingested, feels like one is drinking wind.

*Fox's cunning:* Comes in a small square bottle. The liquid inside is a vibrant red that is constantly moving in circles. It has the consistency of orange juice and tastes slightly of dung.

*Gaseous form :* Comes in a oval bottle. The liquid inside looks like constantly swirling smoke inside, but when the cork is popped, it turns to liquid. When ingested, it feels as though air is moving down their throat.

*Good hope:* Comes in an elongated bottle with a golden stopper. The liquid inside is a blue, white, and green layered that maintains the layers even when shaken. It has a thick consistency and tastes like peanuts.

*Greater magic fang:* Comes in a square vial with a simple cork stopper. The liquid inside is multiple shades of tan, which constantly move in a zigzag pattern. It is very thick and tastes of wheat bread.

*Haste:* Comes in a twisted vial with a carved wooden root stopper. The liquid inside is a variety of red swirls, moving in a very fast and constantly changing pattern. It has a thin consistency and tastes of licorice.

*Heroism:* Comes in a square elongated bottle. The liquid inside is layered in gold and red, retaining its layers even if shaken. It has the consistency of water and is spicy to the taste.

*Hide from animals:* Comes in a flattened square bottle with a simple wooden stopper. The liquid inside a metallic green. It has the consistency of water and tastes like celery.

*Hide from undead:* Comes in a flattened square bottle with a bone stopper. The liquid inside is a metallic silver. It has the consistency of water and tastes like dust.

*Invisibility:* This potion comes in a very slim vial. It appears to be empty until examined closely. Upon examination, the bottle has small glimmering ripples of light and color inside. It has no taste and no consistency.

*Jump:* Comes in a small vial with a green cork stopper. The liquid inside is a light green swirled with yellow. When you drink it, it feels as though grasshoppers are jumping down your throat.

*Lesser restoration:* Comes in a circular ceramic bottle with a golden stopper bearing the symbol of the creator's deity. The liquid inside is white, and it has the consistency and taste of milk.

*Levitate:* Comes in a double circular bottle with a white corked top. The liquid inside is white with swirls of gold constantly moving through it. The liquid inside weighs nothing and has no taste or consistency.

*Mage armor:* Comes in an ovular vial with a blue stone stopper. The liquid inside is an opaque pink with bits of brown floating within. The liquid is very thick and syrupy and tastes like fresh cream when ingested.

*Magic circle against (alignment):* Comes in circular vial with a golden stopper. The liquid inside appears to be pure gold. It has the consistency of water and tastes of sugared apples.

*Magic fang:* Comes in a square vial with a simple cork stopper. The liquid inside is multiple shades of ivory, which constantly move in a zigzag pattern. It is very thick and tastes of wheat bread.

*Misdirection:* Comes in a abstract-shaped vial with a swirled glass stopper. The liquid sparks faintly and shows shifting abstract images. It is the consistency of water and tastes sweet, sour, and bitter at the same time.

*Neutralize poison:* Comes in a small elongated ceramic bottle. The liquid inside is a dark opaque green. It has a lumpy consistency and tastes like rotten grass.

*Nondetection:* Comes in a small, spiraled bottle with a clear glass stopper. The liquid white with a metallic sheen. It is very light and tasteless, but scratches the throat when consumed.

*Owl's wisdom* Usually comes in a small square bottle. It has purple liquid that appears to be constantly moving in a feathery pattern. It has the consistency of orange juice and tastes like dung.

*Pass without trace:* Comes in a small elongated bottle with a wooden stopper shaped like a set of boots. The liquid inside is a medium brown with green flecks which are constantly moving in a horizontal movement. It has the consistency of water and tastes like fresh earth.

*Protection from arrows:* Comes in a ovular vial with a fletched stopper. The liquid inside is a metallic yellow and brown in an octagon pattern. It has the consistency of water and tastes like turtle soup.

*Protection from (alignment):* Comes in small circular vial with a golden stopper. The liquid inside appears to be pure gold. It has the consistency of water and tastes of fresh apples.

*Protection from energy (type):* Comes in an egg shaped glass vial with a gem-encrusted stopper. The liquid inside has a different metallic colors depending on the protection provided. The colors are as follows: fire- dark red; cold- dark blue; electricity-gray; acid-dark green; and sonic-dark gray. Its consistency is like water. When it is consumed, the drinker feels her skin tingle.

*Rage:* Comes in a square vial with a red corked stopper. The liquid is layered with translucent red, gray, and brown lines that retain their form even when the vial is shaken. It has the consistency of water and tastes like cinnamon when consumed.

*Remove blindness/deafness:* Comes in a swirled glass vial with a carved ivory stopper. It is a very light gray and opaque. It has a thick consistency and when consumed, the drinker feels heat at their ears or eyes (whichever has been affected).

*Remove curse:* Comes in a swirled glass vial with a carved ivory stopper. The liquid inside is a light metallic purple. It has a thick consistency, tastes of pepper, and when consumed, the drinker's body tingles all over.

*Remove disease* Comes in a swirled glass vial with carved ivory stopper. The liquid inside is a very light purple. When consumed, the drinker feels heat in all areas of her or his body that are plagued by disease

*Remove fear* Comes in an flattened glass bottle with a carved ivory stopper. The liquid is rust colored and has the appearance that the liquid is constantly flowing downward. It has a thick consistency and tastes of ginger.

*Reduce person:* Comes in an elongated ovular bottle with a fancy stopper. The liquid inside is a light brown that appears to be constantly moving upward. It has a thick consistency and has a faint taste of iron shavings.

*Remove paralysis:* Comes in a swirled glass vial. The liquid is a very light purple in appearance and has a thick consistency. When consumed, the drinker feels his or her body tingle.



*Resist energy:* Comes in a egg shaped glass vial with a gem-encrusted stopper. The liquid inside has a metallic sheen based on the type of energy protection granted. The colors are as follows: fire-red; cold-blue; electricity-white; acid-green; and sonic-light gray. It has the consistency of water and makes the skin tingle when consumed.

*Sanctuary:* Comes in a ovular glass vial with a silver stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity. The liquid inside has a metallic blue and white patterned appearance. It has the consistency of milk and tastes like buttermilk.

*Shield of faith:* Comes in a ovular glass vial with a bronze stopper embossed with the symbol of the creator's deity. The liquid inside has a blue and silver metallic pattern. It has the consistency of milk and tastes like cocoa.

*Spider climb* This potion comes in a rectangular bottle. It is a clear liquid with small black liquid spiders constantly crawling. When consumed, it tickles the throat.

*Tongues:* Comes in a short, flat bottle with a red glass stopper. Depending on the creator, it may even have a stopper shaped like a tongue or mouth. It is a light tan and translucent in appearance. When consumed, it heats up the drinker's mouth.

*Undetectable alignment:* Comes in a swirled glass bottle with a gray glass stopper. The liquid inside is light orange in appearance with a metallic sheen. It has a syrupy consistency and tastes like overripe pears.

*Water breathing:* Comes in a smooth, rounded bottle with a blue cork stopper. It appears to have constantly moving dark blue fish swimming in seawater. It tastes, smells, and has the consistency of sea water.

*Water walk :* Comes in a smooth, rounded bottle with a blue glass stopper. The liquid inside looks exactly like seawater and appears to have moving waves. It tastes, smells, and has the consistency of sea water.

## Reference: General Potion Information (Taken from the 3.5 SRD)

"A potion is a magic liquid that produces its effect when imbibed. Magic oils are similar to potions, except that oils are applied externally rather than imbibed. A potion or oil can be used only once. It can duplicate the effect of a spell of up to 3rd level that has a casting time of less than 1 minute.

Potions are like spells cast upon the imbiber. The character taking the potion doesn't get to make any decisions about the effect—the caster who brewed the potion has already done so. The drinker of a potion is both the effective target and the caster of the effect (though the potion indicates the caster level, the drinker still controls the effect). The person applying an oil is the effective caster, but the object is the target.

**Physical Description:** A typical potion or oil consists of 1 ounce of liquid held in a ceramic or glass vial fitted with a tight stopper. The stoppered container is usually no more than 1 inch wide and 2 inches high. The vial has AC 13, 1 hit point, hardness 1, and a break DC of 12. Vials hold 1 ounce of liquid.

**Identifying Potions:** In addition to the standard methods of identification, PCs can sample from each container they find to attempt to determine the nature of the liquid inside. An experienced character learns to identify potions by memory—for example, the last time she tasted a liquid that reminded her of almonds, it turned out to be a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

**Activation:** Drinking a potion or applying an oil requires no special skill. The user merely removes the stopper and swallows the potion or smears on the oil. The following rules govern potion and oil use. Drinking a potion or using an oil on an item of gear is a standard action. The potion or oil takes effect immediately. Using a potion or oil provokes attacks of opportunity. A successful attack (including grappling attacks) against the character forces a Concentration check (as for casting a spell). If the character fails this check, she cannot drink the potion. An enemy may direct an attack of opportunity against the potion or oil container rather than against the character. A successful attack of this sort can destroy the container. A creature must be able to swallow a potion or smear on an oil. Because of this, incorporeal creatures cannot use potions or oils. Any corporeal creature can imbibe a potion. The potion must be swallowed. Any corporeal creature can use an oil. A character can carefully administer a potion to an unconscious creature as a full-round action, trickling the liquid down the creature's throat. Likewise, it takes a full-round action to apply an oil to an unconscious creature. The caster level for a standard potion is the minimum caster level needed to cast the spell (unless otherwise specified)."

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